

# Environmental Reference Group

Annual Report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 to 31 August 2023

## Purpose

The Environmental Reference Group's (ERG) purpose is to:

- Advise Council on the best ways to improve Wellingtonian's quality of life environmentally, socially, culturally and economically by protecting and enhancing the local environment.
- Bring knowledge and insight into the Council around the environment, including water, energy, waste, biodiversity, heritage, resilience, climate change, urban design and transport management, in the context of Council's roles and priorities.

## About

ERG has a diverse mix of well qualified and experienced members from a range of backgrounds across a wide range of disciplines. Selection of members is usually carried out by the cochair's of the ERG, with support from Democracy Services. There were three new members who started with the group in the 2022/23 period. Diversity within the group is affected by who applies, and currently the group has more males than females but a range of ages and experience.

## Portfolios

The principal areas of interest to the ERG are split into portfolios with portfolio leads at September 2023 as in the table below:

Portfolio Group	ERG Lead 2023
Transport	Shannon Wallace
Climate Change	Sally Faisandier
Waste and Circular Economy	David Binstead
Water	Michelle Rush
Resilience	Spencer Clubb
Urban Design Agency/Urban Growth	Ben Zwartz
Biodiversity/Open Space	George Hobson
Heritage	Emina Petrovic

For each portfolio ERG has written a set of principles to guide submissions and advice. These principles have been attached in an appendix to this report.

## Oral Feedback to Officers; Policies, Strategies and Presentations

During the period of this report, the council officers consulted with ERG on a number of plans and strategies, including:

DATE	Meeting Topics
8 August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Community Facilities Plan</li><li>● Proposed District Plan</li></ul>
12 September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Zero Waste Programme</li></ul>
10 October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Biodiversity Strategy</li></ul>
14 November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Economic Wellbeing Strategy</li></ul>
12 December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Tūpiki Ora &amp; Tākai Here</li><li>● Cultural Heritage Strategy</li></ul>
13 February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Community Facilities Review update</li></ul>
17 April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Cultural Heritage Strategy</li></ul>
8 May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Dog Policy and Animal Bylaw</li></ul>

DATE	Meeting Topics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community Facilities update</li> </ul>
12 June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kilbirnie Park Master Plan</li> <li>● Open Space and Recreation Strategy</li> </ul>
14 August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Climate Work Programme</li> </ul>

## Submissions

During the period of this report the ERG made and / or participated in the following submissions and consultation processes:

- WCC Proposed District Plan submissions, further submission and oral presentation
- Zero Waste Strategy
- LGWM Thorndon Quay bus cycling improvements
- LGWM changes to the Golden Mile
- Oral and written submission on the Newtown to city section of Paneke Pōneke Bike network plan
- WCC Transport projects consultation 'Aro Valley Connection' cycleway

## Issues

ERG would like to acknowledge the significant progress WCC has made over the past year on many environmental issues, for example the Zero Waste strategy; the progress building partnership with tangata whenua; and the roll out of Paneke Pōneke cycleway projects. In recent times, it is encouraging to see WCC making use of its new Parking Policy, e.g. the work just beginning in Newtown.

The proposed district plan has many positives, and represents a superlative effort by the council teams involved. With this process continuing, we would urge council decision makers to ensure that the district plan stays aligned with WCC's growth strategy and the intent of the Government's Urban Development NPS, ensuring a clear signal for housing density around neighbourhood and suburban centres, transport corridors and the inner city. We remain concerned about the provisions for biodiversity, and continue to be of the view that Significant Natural Areas should be included with the District Plan.

The recent decisions regarding the three waters have the potential to further slow the urgent efforts needed to ensure resiliency in provision of water, and in infrastructure improvements to better safeguard water quality in streams and the harbour. We urge WCC to take steps to implement water metering as a key management tool in helping identify leaks; address wasteful behaviours; and prolong the life of our existing water supplies in the face of growing populations. We are concerned there appears to be a gap between WCC's carbon reduction plan and planned work to implement it: we urge that council staff and decision makers ensure that carbon reduction is at the forefront of all capital and policy decision making.

The increasing frequency of extreme weather events are an uncomfortable reminder that climate change is upon us. It is becoming more and more important to ensure that we build in attention to resilience when planning and funding capital projects.

We are aware that WCC is a large organisation, and that ensuring environmental policy does not get lost in a silo is always going to be a challenge. We urge WCC to continue to take deliberate steps to ensure that it is genuinely incorporated across council policy and operations, so that every project considers the opportunity to achieve other outcomes, e.g. biodiversity through transport planning. Likewise, we look forward to WCC continuing to build on progress in regards its focus incorporating Māori perspectives across policy making.

As the issues facing our city continue to get more and more complex, we are encouraged at the steps WCC is taking towards alternative ways of achieving democratic participation, for example use of citizen's assemblies. We strongly encourage the council to look to use such multi-party working processes for matters of concern to communities. There is a need for residents to feel there are more ways to meaningfully engage in the face of recent resident's surveys signalling a concern with this. We acknowledge, of course, that pace can be an issue, and likewise legislative demands: consultation and engagement both need streamlining, and to be made more meaningful and focused.

## Changes

- In July this year we welcomed Matt Scott, Emina Petrovic, Eugene Doyle and David Binstead to our ranks: they bring to ERG some great skills, experience and perspectives that will complement those of other members.
- We farewelled Mike Britton, Clare Stringer and Aaran Whiteford whose time on the ERG had come to an end. We wish to acknowledge the significant efforts of these people, their leadership on submissions and feedback, and their contributions in meetings. We'd like to particularly acknowledge Mike Britton for his length of service: he was part of ERG for nine years.

## Wellington City Council ERG - Profile of members, 1 August 2022 – August 2023

### **Mike Britton (Joined in 2016 left 2023)**

Mike has a background in protected area management with a special interest in national parks and nature protection. He is a former General Manager of Forest & Bird and also Assistant Director of Fish & Game New Zealand. More recently, Mike has become involved in fundraising, primarily for nature protection. Over the last three years he has helped raise money with BirdLife International for island restoration, predator control and the development of sustainable livelihoods in the Pacific. Mike is a member of the Tongaririo Taupo Conservation and the Taupo-nui-a-Tia Management Boards.

### **Steven Almond (Joined in December 2019)**

Steven's background is in industrial design, previously working in the UK before moving to New Zealand in 2012. Steven has increasingly focussed his work on sustainable design and sustainability issues, recently completing a Master's degree in design at Victoria University of Wellington, researching design for a 'Circular Economy'. For the past two years Steven has worked at Garage Project as their Sustainability Ambassador. In addition, Steven works on design projects with a sustainability focus.

### **Sally Faisandier (Joined in December 2019)**

Sally Faisandier (MA (Psych), Dip Tchg, Dip Eval) has worked as a research and evaluation advisor for central government agencies for the past twenty years (ten as a Principal Advisor), which included Health, Education, Social Development, Justice, Māori Development and Land Information. She has written a number of papers on resilience issues, and has a passion for supporting the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. Sally joined the ERG as a generalist, providing expertise in understanding and interpreting research reports over a wide range of topics, to inform policy within a political context.

### **George Hobson (Joined in December 2019)**

George is a passionate 19-year-old advocate for the environment. He has been involved in many on-the-ground conservation projects over the last four years, from reptile monitoring on Mana Island, to Black Petrel research on Great Barrier Island. He now works for Forest & Bird, where he works to lead high profile environmental campaigns. He has also worked on a range of environmental policy issues, from Te Mana o Te Taiao (the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy) to the UN ocean biodiversity treaty. George is fascinated by politics and environmental policy, and is passionate about ensuring that youth voices are not overlooked in these areas.

### **Michelle Rush (Joined in December 2019)**

Michelle Rush is a facilitator, trainer and consultant specialising in collaborative processes and effective stakeholder engagement. She has a background in natural resource management policy and social research, with particular expertise in sustainable land and water policy and sustainable agriculture. She has more than 25 years' experience as a professional facilitator working with businesses, science, industry and government organisations, councils and community groups.

### **Clare Stringer (Joined in December 2019 left 2023)**

Clare's career has been focused on biodiversity conservation and invasive species management. She has worked in policy development as well as project implementation in New Zealand and around the world.

**Arran Whiteford (joined in September 2021 left 2023)**

Arran is a Glaciology graduate with a background in applied mathematics. Skilled in data analysis and modelling, he has expertise and experience in climate policy, and is well versed in community engagement, teaching in science education, and outreach.

**Shannon Wallace (joined in June 2022)**

Shannon is a registered planner currently working as a Principal Analyst at the Ministry for the Environment. Shannon has spent over 11 years working in environmental policy in New Zealand and the UK and has particular expertise in freshwater management, RMA plan implementation and the role of Māori in the planning system. Shannon is member of the Southern Environmental Association and trapper with Predator Free Wellington

**Ben Zwartz (joined in June 2022)**

Ben is a land surveyor with more than twenty years' experience in resource management, civil infrastructure and infill development. He is active in his community of Vogelmorn and in cycling advocacy. He also helps at KaiCycle urban farm.

**Summer Satterthwaite (joined in June 2022)**

Sam is an ambitious young student with a passion for sustainable development and smart climate solutions. They come from a strong background of environmental advocacy and leadership including the 2021 School Strike for Climate team, Forest and Bird Youth, Mountains to Sea and local political engagement. Alongside a passion for wildlife and ecology promoted through global travel and exploring Wellington's nature reserves on land and sea. Currently studying Biotechnology, Entrepreneurship and Environmental Studies, Sam hopes to utilize a multifaceted youth perspective and effective action to promote positive change, resilience and sustainability within the city they love.

**Spencer Clubb (joined in June 2022)**

Spencer has 20 years' experience working as an environment and sustainability policy professional. He has worked in government and non-government roles in New Zealand and the UK on a wide range of issues including natural resource management, biodiversity, energy, environmental impact assessment and freshwater.

**Matt Scott (joined in July 2023)**

Matt is an Assistant Manager at Ernst and Young in Te Whanganui-a-Tara in the Climate Change and Sustainability Services team. His technical expertise lies within the climate change space, focusing on greenhouse gas emissions measurement, net-zero strategies, carbon abatement measurement, and sustainability policy. His drive for climate change advocacy extends to the intersection with local politics, public transport, neighbourhood connectedness, accessibility, and resilience.

**Emina Petrovic (joined in July 2023)**

Dr Emina Kristina Petrović is a Senior Lecturer in Sustainability in Design at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington. Emina is recognised for her expertise on toxicity, sustainability, and healthiness of building materials, and for calling for a more detailed consideration of buildings and building materials for the totality of their impacts, from ecosystem health to ethics of production. Currently, Emina is involved with research projects which examine aspects of system and behaviour change in building industry. Resident of Wellington for almost 25 years, Emina is also a mother of two high schoolers.

**Eugene Doyle (joined in July 2023)**

Eugene has been at the forefront of a campaign to fight ongoing contamination of the Ōwhiro Stream and Taputeranga Marine Reserve. He is a member of the Utilities Disputes Limited Water Advisory Committee. He is a founder and convenor of both 4C – Coastal Communities and Climate Change, and the Wellington Residents Association Network. In 2023 Eugene launched Te Hononga Ki Te Upoko – Wellington's Catchments Collective, which brings together groups within the wider Wellington area.

**David Binstead (joined in July 2023)**

David's lifelong passion for te taiao formed early and has influenced purpose-led roles spanning outdoor consumer goods, communications and digital media, and sustainability. Most recently, he co-built circular economy startup Again Again - deploying analogue and digital reuse systems countrywide to tackle single-use packaging waste. Prior, he contributed to growing the social enterprise sector in Aotearoa. He works in a sustainability/waste minimisation advisory role for a Wellington-region council.